



"Sola Scriptura: It Is Written"

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Scripture Lesson: Luke 4:1-13

We're now in the home stretch of our series on the "five solas" (on what we're calling the five pillar doctrines of Reformed Christian faith). You may recall that we began with "*sola gratia*" (we live by grace alone), and then the next week we learned that we live and work "*soli Deo Gloria*" (to God's glory alone). And then last week, remember if you were here, that the men up on the roof let their friend down in front of Jesus and *Jesus saw their faith*. We live "*sola fide*" (We live by faith alone).

Now, to introduce our theme this morning I'm going to do something that I've always wanted

to do. I've never had the nerve to do it until this morning. I want to play "rock, paper, scissors" with everyone in this congregation right now. So put down whatever you have. You know how to play the game. You get to the count of three, and choose rock or paper or scissors. Okay? Get ready. Here we go. 1, 2, 3.

How many of you chose paper? Paper wins this morning! Our theme is "*sola Scriptura*." We're talking about the power of the page of the Word of God. So paper wins. Some of you think I'm cheating. We're going to be thinking about temptation this morning, so I guess I did succumb to a little cheating

there. But our theme is the Word of God, the Bible.....this wonderful gift. It has sixty-six books that were written over a period of about 2000 years. You'll find the authors in this book are everything from a shepherd to a king, to a medical doctor (We're going to be reading the words of Dr. Luke in a few moments. The literary genres include history and poetry and personal letters and proverbs. And what is truly miraculous is that out of this hodge-podge of people, places, times and circumstances, there is a laser-beam like focus, and that is: this is the book that tells how people are being restored to full humanity by their Creator --- that we have a loving God who is reconciling the world to Himself.

This book in 2008 is still the most read, the most published and most translated book in the entire world. Did you know that the New York Times just uniformly deletes the Bible from its best-seller list because if they didn't it would be number one every single week? Every single month, year after year after year. This marvelous book, the scriptures that God has given to us.

Let me ask you a question. Suppose you have a bad week. You get smacked by a bad set of circumstances that just knock your self-esteem down to the ground; you lose your self-confidence; you're suddenly very vulnerable say this week to temptation, and then lo and behold out of nowhere there comes this mouth-watering, alluring, shiny forbidden fruit and it appears

right in front of you. And you look around, and no one's looking, so what do you do?

You say, "Well, it depends on the temptation. I might take a cold shower. I might call a friend on the phone and go have lunch. I might get out the penal code and look up how many years I'd get if I went through with it. I might just wave the waiter with the dessert away from my table. But you know what Jesus would say? --- *because we know what Jesus did* --- Jesus would grab hold of this book. This is where Jesus would go at the moment of temptation.

I invite you to turn to Luke, chapter 4, verses 1-13, the account of Jesus' temptations in the wilderness. While you're turning let me tell you a story that sets our tone today. A grandpa was walking along one day with his grandson, and they came across a frog. And the frog spoke! And the grandpa reached down and picked up this frog. And the frog said, "If you kiss me I will turn into this magnificently gorgeous princess and I'll be devoted to you for the rest of your life." Well the grandfather took this frog and put it in his pocket and kept walking and a little bit later the little boy said, "Grandpa, why don't you do what it said?" "Well son, I'd have to say at this point in my life I think I'd rather have a talking frog."*We all have our different temptations.*

Let's look at the first verse of Luke, chapter 4:

4 Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, 2 where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. 3 The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread." 4 Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'" 5 Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. 6 And the devil said to him, "To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. 7 If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." 8 Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'" 9 Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, (Now here is a chilling moment because Satan picks up a Bible and quotes the Scriptures) 10 for it is written, (Satan says) 'He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,' 11 and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'" 12 Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" 13 When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.....Here ends the reading.

Our new best friend

I've got a question for you: How does Satan appear to us? Does he show up in his red suit and his pitch-fork and curly moustache? No, that's not a temptation. Satan always shows up before us as our new best friend. "Hey, let's think about *you* for awhile. Let's think about *your* problems." That's what Satan does here with Jesus, doesn't he?: "*What, Jesus, the Son of God, hungry? God's Son should not be hungry. Let's fix it.....Jesus, do something. Turn those stones into bread.*"

But you see the problem with that is in the wilderness that time had been set aside for Jesus to have an experience of utter dependence on his Father. What would have happened if Jesus had caved in at that moment? What would have happened is: ---- he would not have gone further on his mission. We would not have a Savior in Jesus of Nazareth. Because Jesus would have made himself into a super-being who was above the struggles and the heartaches and the difficulties and limitations that you and I have in our life. We would not have the high priest in the heavens who's able to sympathize with our weaknesses. Everything hung in the balance.

And Jesus was tempted. Scripture makes that crystal clear. Jesus was tempted. Tempted, not only to satisfy his hunger, but to use his power to his own ends. But what

does he do? Jesus grabs the Word of God and he says, *"It is written"* and he quotes Deuteronomy chapter 8 verse 3. *"One shall not live by bread alone."* "I'm sorry. I'm going to pass, Satan. I'm going to allow the Spirit of my Father to meet the needs and not you. I will not use my power to make bread out of stones." And his rebuffs to Satan's second temptation (the temptation to power) and to Satan's third temptation (the temptation to test God) occur in the same way. Each time Jesus grounds his response in the Word of God.

The Bible of memory

Now, we can't grab a Bible every time we're faced with temptation. We're not always around a Bible when temptation comes. Jesus wasn't around a Bible when tempted in the wilderness. He didn't have his personal scroll of the Torah out there among the rocks and the heat and the hunger. No, he relied on his memory of Scripture to serve him in his time of trial. And that's about as good a reason as any I think to be in the Word --- and commit the Word to memory.

But, maybe you're thinking, "Well sure, Jesus could do that. Me? No way! I don't know Scripture very well. I can't just come up with Scripture's words off the top of my head." And that may be so, but I suspect that many of us know more Scripture than we give ourselves credit for. Sure, we may not be able to cite chapter and verse. We may not even know, say, whether

"Blessed are the peacemakers" comes from the New Testament or the Old Testament, but we know it's in there somewhere. And when faced with a situation of tension, of conflict between ourselves and someone else, we can remember that word *"Blessed are the peacemakers"* and in that moment think about what it means to be a peacemaker in our present situation. The point is to let Scripture be guide and compass.

Sola Scriptura?

Now, "sola Scriptura"? (Scripture alone). Does that mean that we go out and do what the writer of that humorous book "My Year of Living Biblically" --- that is, take everything literally such that we do everything the Bible says down to the "T", never allowing a razor to come to our face and growing a beard and that sort of thing? Of course not. Sola scriptura is saying though that the Bible should be pre-eminent as our guide for life and faith, and then read through experience, reason, and the received wisdom of the people of God.

Have you ever in a moment of temptation called some specific scripture to mind? (Or read some specific scripture).....and had it become for you a kind of prayer? What happened? If it didn't just float through your head and pass from one ear through the other, --- if it really became for you a form of prayer, ---- I can tell you what

happened: It gave you strength/power to stand. It gave you a power you didn't know you had. Yes, the flesh is weak. As Scripture says, *"The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak,"* and there's "many-a-time" when, with the Apostle Paul, we have to say: *"I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do"* (Romans 7:15, TNIV). Were it not so, grace wouldn't be necessary. But with Paul we can also say, *"Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!"* GRACE. But we also have our part to play, --- and when we open ourselves to the Spirit and the Word -- - there is power. *The right focus.*

A pitcher's focus

Think of a pitcher on a major league baseball team. You cannot be a pitcher on a major league baseball team if you cannot tune out the sound of the crowd, if you cannot tune out the voices in the crowd that are trying to get your attention. Do you see the analogy? Temptations are those distractions that try to pull us away from the center focus of our life ---- to live daily for God. It's like a player coming up to a pitcher in the dugout between innings who says, "Hey, check out the babe in the third row above the visitor dugout." And the pitcher says, "Get out of my head. I don't want to think about that." Or someone says to him, "Hey, did you see what they wrote about you in the paper this morning?" He

says, "Get out of here. I'm focused on the job for which I was created."

Sin is stupid

The great writer Dallas Willard has said, "What God wants to bring us to when temptation comes our way is to say, 'Sin is stupid.'" I like that. "Sin is stupid."

I know where I'm headed.
I know why I'm here.
I don't have time for that.

Fellow Presbyterian pastor Vic Pentz tells of one of his proudest moments as a dad. He says:

"One of my daughters was in middle school and I was sitting at home at about ten o'clock at night when she was at a sleepover. The phone rang and I picked it up. She said, 'Hi daddy.' I said, 'Hi honey. What are you doing?' She said, 'I'm sitting in the laundry room reading a Nancy Drew novel.' I said, 'What? What are the other girls doing?' 'Oh, there in there watching a movie.' I said, 'Oh, watch the movie with your other girlfriends.' She said, 'Daddy, it's an R-rated movie.' And then she told me the name of this movie that --oh my goodness, there was no way that a young Christian middle-school girl should be watching. I thought, 'Yes! She has stood against the peer pressure of the expectations of her friends. She is living before the audience of One.'"

You be smart.

So what's all this boil down to?

Just this --- a word directed to me as much as to you: Don't cave in. Don't be deceived. Don't take the bait. Keep your head in the Word of God because your life is important every day and it has eternal significance. "Sin is stupid." You be smart!

Would you join with me in prayer?

Prayer:

Gracious God, help us to stop living the way that many of us are living because we're so busy that we don't have time to ground ourselves properly in your truth, in your Word....to immerse ourselves in that which will allow us to stand against the wiles of the evil one....that come to us packaged so attractively in the values of our world. Lord, help each one of us to ground ourselves in your truth, so that we might walk in your way; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.